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WOODLAND COTTAGE;

OR

THE PARENTS' CONVERSATIONS

ABOUT BEES, ANTS, DOGS, SILKWORMS, FISH, WHALES, MICROSCOPE, CLOTH, PAPER, FRUIT, TEA, COFFEE, GLASS, ETC.

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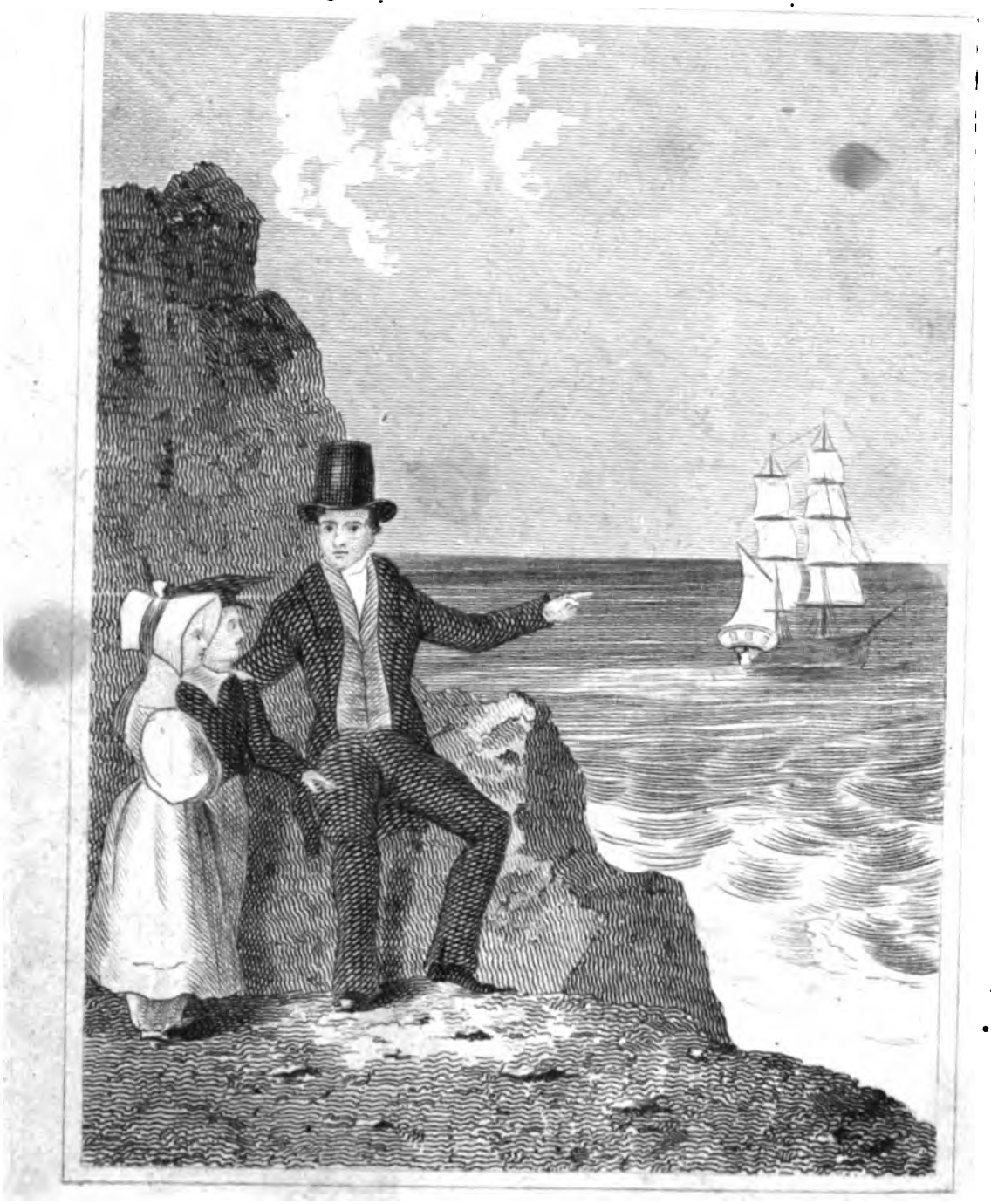

MR ACTON & HIS CHILDREN UPON THE SEA SHORE.

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WOODLAND COTTAGE,

OR,

HENRY AND EMMA ACTON'S CONVERSATIONS

TO THEIR CHILDREN,

ON THE

Animal and Vegetable World.

COMPILED BY A MOTHER FOR HER CHILDREN.

THIRD EDITION,

WITH ADDITIONS AND CORRECTIONS BY THE COMPILER.

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INTRODUCTION.

Page

CHAPTER I.

CONVERSATION AT BREAKFAST ABOUT TEA, SUGAR, THE BEE, &c. 9

CHAPTER II.

THE WALK.—CONVERSATION ABOUT DOGS, THEIR INSTINCT, &c. 18

CHAPTER III.

THE FLOWER GARDEN.—CONVERSATION ABOUT PLANTS, &c. 28

CHAPTER IV.

DINNER.—DESCRIPTION OF THE MANUFACTURE OF GLASS. CONVERSATION ABOUT FRUITS, &c. 34

CHAPTER V.

CONVERSATION ABOUT THE SILKWORM, COFFEE, CHOCOLATE, &c. 44

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CONVERSATION ABOUT the exchange
CLOTH AND PAPER.—ACCOUNT OF

CHAPTER VIII.

SKATING.—CONVERSATION ABOUT ICE, THE PROPERTIES OF AIR, &c. 77

CHAPTER IX.

THE MICROSCOPE.—BAROMETER.—THERMOMETER.—THE BANIAN TREE.—THE WHALE.—ACCOUNT OF THE HISTORY OF PRINTING. 87

CHAPTER X.

CONVERSATION ABOUT THE ORANGE.—ANECDOTE OF A PAINTING. 102

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INTRODUCTION.

As Mr. and Mrs. Acton were sitting under the arbor of "Woodland Cottage," viewing the frolics of their two children, William and Ellen, Mrs. A. observes, "It appears to me, Henry, that our boy and and girl are now becoming of an age which requires your earnest attention to their education; and it is quite within the scope of your reading, and would prove an interesting task for your idle hours, so to arrange a short description of many varieties of the animal and vegetable world, as would be both pleasing and instructive."

Henry Acton here interrupted his wife, remarking, that her proposal was attended by many and much more difficulties than she seemed to imagine; as it would require a great deal of *tact* to avoid a mere catalogue of remarkable circumstances, and convey the information in such a manner as would be thought an agreeable recreation. To this Mrs. Acton replied, "You are anxious William should enter trade; and can any thing be more likely to

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give him a partiality for that occupation, than being taught to consider mankind indebted to it for almost all their comforts?"

"Say no more, Emma; we will immediately commence the arrangement of your plan. First, it will be necessary for us to talk over together those objects we deem most desirable to descant on, and then, having written down whatever remarkable circumstances we may know concerning each, introduce the subject at our meals and during our walks, so as not to fatigue the minds of our children with the fear of a lesson."

Mr. and Mrs. Acton pursued their intention with a success that was only equalled by their own gratification, in perceiving the minds of their son and daughter expand daily under a course of instruction which was hailed as a treat. And such was the accession of happiness conferred on the whole family, by rendering the parents and children indebted to each other for amusement, that Woodland Cottage was cited in the neighborhood as the spot where discontent found no resting place.

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extracted. Europeans are said first to have become acquainted with sugar during the crusades, five or six hundred years ago; but the art of refining it into the beautiful white lumps your sister Julia is dropping into her cup, was discovered by a Venitian, in 1650.

In former times, honey was used to sweet-

"What an ex[illegible]bstance culled from different morning, my boy! industrious little insect, the to his son. "There[illegible]d flights to and from the breakfast as a matter of[illegible]red with a sort of yellow without once reflecting on[illegible]pleased ourselves with countries which have been [illegible]ber, Julia, observing gers encountered, before the few[illegible] and drive away compose your present meal could [illegible]ter the hive; on the same table. [illegible]elling and

"The Tea, for instance, which is disappea[illegible]r com- so fast while you look at me with incredulous[illegible]ise

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[illegible] ir [illegible] into it

I need scarcely [illegible] most useful of all [illegible] likewise supplies us [illegible] er, leather, and various [illegible] horns, bones, and even [illegible] ar is made by squeezing and [illegible] the juice of the soft pith of a spe- [illegible] eed or cane, found in the East and [illegible] st Indies; and the refuse undergoes a pro- [illegible] cess of fermentation, from which rum is

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extracted. Europeans are said first to have become acquainted with sugar during the crusades, five or six hundred years ago; but the art of refining it into the beautiful white lumps your sister Julia is dropping into her cup, was discovered by a Venitian, in 1650.

"In former times, honey was used to sweeten liquids; a substance culled from different flowers by that industrious little insect, the *Bee*, whose repeated flights to and from the hive with its body covered with a sort of yellow dust, we have so often pleased ourselves with watching. Do you remember, Julia, observing a large number of bees attack and drive away some wasps that attempted to enter the hive; and just before winter their expelling and killing the drones, or idle portion of their community? Your mother showed you likewise

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the comb under a glass cover; and you were both delighted at seeing some thousands of those interesting insects busily employed in preparing cells, filling them with honey, and then closing each with wax.

"While we are upon Bees, my Son, I must tell you a pretty story about the manner in which the Egyptians feed their bees upon the banks of the Nile. You know, William, how the Nile differs from almost every other river in the world? Yes, father. It floods the whole country on each side for a great distance and for a long time every year. Well, my son, when the waters retire the Sainfoin, a species of clover, comes into blossom in the upper parts of Egypt; so in order that their bees may enjoy the richness of the flowers, the owners of bees in Lower Egypt send them to that

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part of the country, where they are placed in the form of pyramids in boats prepared for that purpose. They stop a few days in one place, and then sail a mile down the river, where they rest in the same manner. They continue this until February, when after traversing the whole length of Egypt, these busy travellers arrive at the sea. All the hives being marked with the owner's name, are then sent off to their respective homes. Is it not very curious William, that each bee on its return finds its own hive, just as certainly as the wood-cutter at evening will turn to his own lowly cot.

"The natural history of the bee, and the attention paid to the queen of each hive, is extremely curious. Every hive is composed of three different sorts of bees; the first sort consists of those called laborers, which are by

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far the most numerous; these are intended for the purpose of labor, and for supplying the young bees with food. The second sort, which are one third larger, are called drones, and are supposed to be the males; of this kind there are from 1500 to 2000 in a hive consisting of 20,000 labourers. The third sort are called the queen bees, and are said to lay all the eggs from which the whole swarm is hatched; they are much larger than either of the former, and seldom but one in each hive. On examining bees through a glass hive, the whole appears at first sight like anarchy and confusion, but on a more careful inspection you will soon discover every insect sedulously employed, and following one pursuit with a settled purpose. And as perhaps you may think that of the *Ant* and *Beaver* not less so,

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I will give you likewise a short description of them.

"There are many species of ants found with us. Each colony is composed of one queen, some males, which have wings, and a numerous body of the neuter or working sort. They dig their habitations deep in winter, but near the surface of the ground in warm weather, and divide them into a number of small oval cells communicating with each other, which are drained and kept clean; dirt, and the bodies of those that die, being dragged out.

"In the summer it is quite amusing to see how busy the whole community is; some pulling along substances much larger and heavier than themselves, while others come to assist in overcoming any obstruction. In the winter it is supposed they are torpid, as they do not lay

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up any stores. A larger sort of this insect is very destructive in some parts of Asia and Africa; and from the almost incredible multitudes which appear, becomes even formidable.

"The Beaver is three or four feet long, and weighs fifty or sixty pounds. It has webs on its hind feet for swimming, toes separating like fingers on its front, and a flat oval-shaped tail covered with scales, on which it draws loads. These animals assemble together during the summer to build houses, which are most ingeniously constructed, being divided into apartments; and as they live equally well either on land or in water, their habitations are usually across some morass or swampy lake.

"They were formerly found in England, but the latest account of them on that island was in 1188. At present they are found,

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